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City of Los Angeles

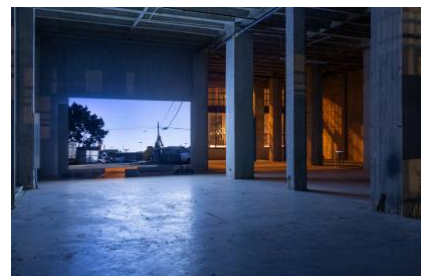
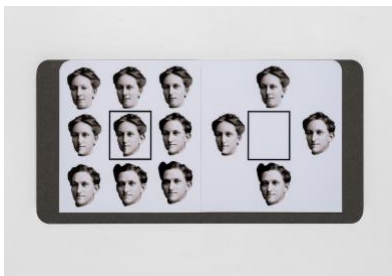
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City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs,
Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery Presents
SUSAN SILTON: DIVING INTO THE WRECK
Exhibition Dates: September 3 to November 22, 2026
Opening Reception: Thursday, September 10, 2026



[PRESS KIT AVAILABLE HERE](#)

Los Angeles, CA,—The Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery is pleased to present *Susan Silton: Diving into the Wreck*, the first major survey of the work of LA-based artist Susan Silton. Comprising over 150 works that include participatory and multi-media installations, photographic, video, and audio works, early graphic pieces, and textual interventions, the exhibition highlights Silton as a key figure in West Coast conceptual, feminist, and queer genealogies of art and design. Making its debut alongside the exhibition is *Civilized Voices*, a site-specific public project inspired by a series of billboards erected by Aline Barnsdall at Barnsdall Park in the 1940s. As an homage to Barnsdall's iconoclastic use of billboards for social and political messaging, Silton has commissioned five Los Angeles-area poets (Rocío Carlos, Cathy Lin Che, Erin Marie Lynch, Lynne Thompson, and Terry Wolverton) to write new works that will be featured on five hand-painted billboards sited during the exhibition among the pine trees in front of the gallery.

"Los Angeles's creative community is the city's most important resource," says Daniel Tarica, General Manager of the City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs, "and LA-based artist Susan Silton exemplifies its engaged and empathic spirit. DCA is proud to amplify the vision and impact of her work through this major exhibition. Silton's productive relationship with LAMAG, as both an exhibiting artist and graphic designer, began in the

1980s, making it a fitting venue to continue the cultural dialogue she has pursued for over 30 years.”

“This survey of Silton’s work is long overdue, and there’s no better place to stage it than LAMAG, in the official gallery of the city that has shaped her practice for over four decades,” said exhibition curator Andy Campbell. “Whether Silton is addressing grief, politics, or language, she always invites her audience to look honestly at the world and be changed by the encounter.”

Diving into the Wreck takes its title from a 1972 poem written by Adrienne Rich (1929-2012), a poet and essayist active in feminist and lesbian literary circles. In it, Rich narrates the experiences of a diver who plumbs oceanic depths to explore an unnamed “wreck.” It is unclear whether the “wreck” the diver seeks might be that of her own life, her coming to consciousness within the feminist movement, or a fruitful relationship long after its end. Even amidst such ambiguity, the diver points out the power of language to guide her actions and orientation to the world, stating:

*“I came to explore the wreck.
The words are purposes.
The words are maps.”*

Rich’s poem is a touchstone for assessing Silton’s multifaceted practice—one that pressurizes the limits and possibilities of text, vision, perception, and participation in the process of becoming part of the social and political world. Many of these interests were first expressed in the 1980s and 90s in Silton’s designs for a clientele of art, theater, and non-profit organizations in Los Angeles and its surrounds. The work of her design studio, cleverly stylized as SoS (and sometimes appearing with the tagline: “design help is on the way”), combined the playful language of postmodern experimentalism with the savvy, political imperatives of feminist and lesbian political organizing. While many designers—then and now—worked to fix meaning, Silton understood that the message is never settled; it is always twisting, mutating.

Such is the structure of Silton’s artistic practice as well, which recursively builds upon a collection of concerns, and, by extension, suggests how political life might be deepened by repeated, searching engagement. Focusing upon the themes of body and voice, perspective and vision, graphics and multiples, and the production of public memory, hers is a practice that is alive to the world, insisting upon both contemplation and participation. From some of the earliest work in the exhibition—such as *broken Water* (1993), which considers the personal grief of mothers/caretakers mourning the lives of their gay sons in the earliest years of the HIV/AIDS pandemic—to *The stain of _____*. *A stain on _____*. (2018), a recent series of crumpled photographs of stains appearing on the streets of Los Angeles, an embodied response to political disappointment—Silton’s work asks viewers to examine the “wreck” of their internal and external worlds in the hopes that newer, better paths might be imagined for the future.

Susan Silton: Diving into the Wreck is curated by Andy Campbell with organizational and curatorial support from Nancy Meyer, LAMAG Curator. Support for this exhibition has been provided by an Infinite Expansion Grant from The Mike Kelley Foundation for the Arts, Kim and Keith Allen-Niesen, The Barnsdall Art Park Foundation, the Plum Foundation, individual donors, and the City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs.

Susan Silton: Diving into the Wreck is accompanied by a catalogue co-published by the Blaffer Art Museum at the University of Houston (who originated the exhibition) and Inventory Press, supported by The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, the Aurora-Viburnum Foundation, and The Shifting Foundation. The nearly 300-page publication is edited by Andy Campbell and includes contributions by Adrienne Rich, Ramón García, Amelia Jones, Natilee Harren, Dana Johnson, Susanna Phillips Newbury, Dodie Bellamy, David Evans Frantz, Mady Schutzman, and Karen Moss. In addition to featuring 200 images, the volume will also include a special artist edition from Silton's series *By power of suggestion, which in favorable circumstances becomes instruction*. The catalogue will be available for purchase onsite and on artbook.com/D.A.P. (Distributed Art Publishers).

About the Artist

Susan Silton resides in Los Angeles. Her interdisciplinary projects respond to the complexities of subjectivity in a given moment—often through poetic combinations of humor, discomfort, subterfuge and unabashed beauty. These works take form in performance, participatory projects, photography, video, installation, text/audio and print-based works. Her work has been presented at MoCA, Los Angeles; SFMOMA, San Francisco; Susanne Vielmetter Los Angeles Projects; LAXART, Los Angeles; Hammer Museum; ICA/Philadelphia; MAK Center for Art and Architecture, Los Angeles; and Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne, among others. Projects include the commissioned site-specific performance *Quartet for the End of Time*, produced by LAND (Los Angeles Nomadic Division); the site-specific opera, *A Sublime Madness in the Soul*; and the book project *Who's in a Name?* In 2015, Silton's *Whistling Project* was included in SITE Santa Fe's year-long series of exhibitions, *SITE 20 Years/20 Shows*, which included a commissioned performance by The Crowing Hens, the women's whistling group Silton founded in 2009.

Silton has received fellowships and awards from the Getty/California Community Foundation, Art Matters, Center for Cultural Innovation, Cultural Affairs Department of the City of Los Angeles, The MacDowell Colony, Banff Centre for the Arts, Durfee Foundation, The Shifting Foundation, and Fellows of Contemporary Art (FOCA). Most recently, her LA Metro Art commission for permanent installation, *WE, OUR, US*, opened in Los Angeles at the Wilshire/Fairfax station.

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Image Credits: (left) *Mutation #6 (Somewhere in the Middle)*, 1994, from the series *mutatis mutandis* (1993-94), archival ink on Ilford Gloss mounted on archival board, antique stereoscope, wood; Photo: Ruben Diaz; (middle) *Inside Out*, 2007, site-specific installation for Pasadena Museum of California Art, artist-designed vinyl tarps, sandbags, pony clips; Photo: Robert Wedemeyer; (right) *Bursting in air*, 2022, video installation with 5.1 audio, printed matter, wood; Photo: Ian Byers-Gamber

About the Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery

The Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery (LAMAG), established in 1954, is the city's longest-running institution devoted solely to exhibiting art and is located atop Olive Hill within Barnsdall Art Park in East Hollywood. The park was gifted to the City of Los Angeles in 1927 by Aline Barnsdall, who stipulated that it be dedicated to the arts, inspired by her original vision and the architectural legacy of Frank Lloyd Wright, who designed the Hollyhock House and envisioned a vibrant arts center for the community. LAMAG's current building—a spacious 10,000-square-foot gallery—was constructed and opened in 1971,

providing a modern, purpose-built venue for exhibitions and public programs. Many renowned artists first gained recognition at LAMAG, including Carlos Almaraz, Eleanor Antin, John Baldessari, Mark Bradford, Vija Celmins, Harry Gamboa Jr., David Hammons, Barbara Kruger, Kerry James Marshall, Senga Nengudi, Catherine Opie, Sandy Rodriguez, Ed Ruscha, and Bruce and Norman Yonemoto. Among its most influential leaders, Josine Ianco-Starrels (director, 1975–1987) championed artistic independence, social justice, and under-recognized artists, including women and artists of color. Her legacy of diversity and creative risk-taking endures as LAMAG remains a free, welcoming space dedicated to expanding access to contemporary art for Los Angeles’s diverse communities.

About the City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA)

As a leading, progressive arts and cultural agency, DCA empowers Los Angeles’ vibrant communities by supporting and providing access to quality visual, literary, musical, performing, and educational arts programming; managing vital cultural centers; preserving historic sites; creating public art; and funding services provided by arts organizations and individual artists. Formed in 1925, DCA promotes arts and culture as a way to ignite a powerful dialogue, engage LA’s residents and visitors, and ensure LA’s varied cultures are recognized, acknowledged, and experienced. DCA’s mission is to strengthen the quality of life in Los Angeles by stimulating and supporting arts and cultural activities, ensuring public access to the arts for residents and visitors alike. DCA advances the social and economic impact of arts and culture through grantmaking; public art; community arts; performing arts; and strategic marketing, development, design, and digital research. DCA creates and supports arts programming, maximizing relationships with other city agencies, artists, and arts 5 and cultural nonprofit organizations to provide excellent service in neighborhoods throughout Los Angeles. For more information, please visit culture.lacity.gov or follow us on Facebook at: [facebook.com/culturela](https://www.facebook.com/culturela), Instagram [@culture_la](https://www.instagram.com/culture_la), and Twitter [@culture_la](https://twitter.com/culture_la).

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